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Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WINNING POSTER ART DISPLAYED IN THE BATESON BUILDING

Award winning posters celebrating *May Is Mental Health Month* are on exhibit until April 30 in the Atrium of the Bateson Building in downtown Sacramento. The posters are part of an annual contest sponsored by the San Bernardino Department of Behavioral Health to raise public awareness about mental health as well as the myths and stigma that surround mental illness.

"From its rather meager beginning some ten years ago, this grassroots effort has evolved into a major community project with local merchants donating more than \$7,000 in U.S. Savings Bonds and other prizes," said Dr. Stephen W. Mayberg, Director of the State Department of Mental Health.

This year, for the first time, a team of county clinicians spoke at various school assemblies at the request of individual school principals. The therapists provided the children with valuable facts about good mental health to use in creating their posters while at the same time educating them about mental illness. "The contest grows each year in popularity and community awareness. The positive impact on the kids is amazing," said Mayberg. "Many of the children have re-directed their energies toward a new self awareness, away from gangs and violence. Some who have successfully competed in the contest more than once have combined their U.S. Savings Bonds to invest in their education. A few students have even gone on to graduate with art degrees and work with Disney and Pixar studios," said Mayberg.

On April 14, 1999, ninety-two winners were selected from more than 800 contestants from San Bernardino County schools. Those children, seven in each of grades K-12, will be honored at a reception in the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors' Chambers on May 7th. Prizes ranging from United State Savings Bonds for first-place winners in each grade to day passes at a San Bernardino amusement park will be presented to the young artists. The lucky first place winner will receive a mountain bike as the grand prize.

Mental illness strikes without regard for age, gender, ethnicity or social strata. Within the next year, at least one out of five of California's citizens will experience, personally or through a family member, a diagnosable mental illness or mental disorder. During the month of May, numerous activities will be conducted statewide to celebrate positive mental health. All Californians are urged to contact their local mental health department, board, agency, or association to find out about activities in their area and to see how they can help. For further information about the annual San Bernardino Mental Health Poster contest, contact Bill Katin at 909-386-0706.

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